C!N
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New Avengers
Illuminati

There have always been those who wield power, shaping the direction of their world. Some, such as presidents and kings, do so in a very public way; others choose a more secretive path.

The six heroes known collectively as The Illuminati *definitely* belong to the latter group.

Readers first witnessed the machiavellian machinations of these heroes in the ***Civil War*** prelude book ***New Avengers: The Illuminati Special.*** Now writer *Brian Bendis & Brian Reed* are joining with artist *Jim Cheung* to offer further revelations regarding the Illuminati and their intervention in historical events of significance in the Marvelverse in the ***New Avengers: The Illuminati*** limited series.

For readers who missed the first comic book appearance of this comic book cabal, co-writer *Brian Reed* offers a rundown of the roster. "The Illuminati are Iron Man, Reed Richards, Black Bolt, Namor, Professor X and Doctor Strange. They are each one of the most powerful or influential men in their respective corners of the Marvel Universe, and whenever they see a situation developing or realize that something terribly big has just gone down, they assemble and do what they can to deal with it behind the scenes,before it gets any further out of hand."

The new series isn't exactly a prequel *or* a sequel. "This series actually takes place somewhere in the middle of the ***Illuminati*** one shot," Reed explained. "In that issue, we saw the group come together, and then it moved forward in time to the pre-***Civil War*** days. In this series, we see the adventures the group shared in those in-between years."

Readers who think they know their Marvel history might be surprised by some of the revelations made in these series. Bendis, Reed, & Cheung have skillfully woven the Illuminati into crucial Marvel moments, casting them in pivotal roles without contradicting already-published storylines. "Each issue will focus on a different bit of history," Reed said. "Writing one-shot issues has been in incredible challenge, because you quickly realize you could get a whole miniseries out of any *one* of these stories!

"We open just after the Kree/Skrull war, circa 1972 Marvel. According to the one shot, this event is why the Illuminati was formed, so now we get to see how they dealt with it.

Illuminating the Illuminati

"Then we come up to near-present-day and explore where the Infinity Gems are now and how Reed Richards is dealing with the fact that back when the Infinity Gauntlet even happened, he was wiped out of existence. It turns out he didn't take it well.

"Then we're walking into one of the biggest challenges in the Marvel Universe: making the Beyonder cool again. It's the Beyonder, in the modern-day (pre-***Civil War***) Marvel Universe and—well, it's one heck of a ride!

"There's also Marvel Boy to deal with. And then the whole thing comes tumbling down as their fellow heroes find out about the Illuminati and... well, it isn't pretty..."

Will certain issues focus more on individual members of the Illuminati? "All of the characters will feature prominently in each issue," Reed explained. "It's just too good of a cast to leave anyone sitting on the sidelines. While certain characters will have more of the spotlight in one issue than another, we don't really have the 'Iron Man issue' or the 'Reed Richards issue.' The whole team is always bringing their individual skills to the table, and we're always trying to show them as each being integral to the whole."

Does a group this powerful and this influential ever make the wrong choices? "Hah! A better question is 'do they ever make the *right* choices?' Bendis and I were talking about the end to an issue the other night and how to tweak it so 'these poor guys can get a win for once.' Expect to see some fallout outside of this book based on the decisions the Illuminati have made over the years."

The Illuminati Special revealed that this superheroic cadre doesn't always agree on every decision—and that lack of single-mindedness will play a role in the limited series as well. "We always see little chinks in the team's armor. Namor wants to do things one way, but the rest of the team goes the other. Reed gets a bit obsessed with something, while Tony thinks he should calm down. It's fun to play with those character dynamics and see how this group of very powerful men plays when they're forced to work with others."

How many other Marvel heroes are aware of the existence of this secret confederation of heroes? "That's where the series ends up," Reed said. "There is one day, one event, where the bottom falls out for the Illuminati. The whole super-hero community learns what they've been up to and just what good and bad has come of it. You're going to see the X-Men, the Inhumans, the Avengers, the Fantastic Four -- absolutely *everyone* find out about it all at the same time."

As you might imagine, one of the most challenging aspects of ***New Avengers: Illuminati*** was finalizing the list of crucial moments to be spotlighted in the limited series. How much research did Bendis and Reed have to do in order to prepare a working list, and how much more did they have to do to whittle it down to one limited series' worth of storylines? "We knew what our big themes were (Kree/Skrull, Infinity Gauntlet, etc) and then we'd dig into whatever research we needed to support the story at hand," Reed said. "Sometimes that research would change a plot direction and sometimes it would enhance it. For example, we had a different idea for why the Illuminati would round up the Infinity Gems until I remembered that She-Hulk handed the Power Gem right to Reed Richards during her recent adventures."

Were there Marvel moments left over for a followup series, should ***New Avengers: Illuminati*** prove too popular to end after one miniseries run? "I've come to realize that I could write Illuminati stories for years to come. Not just stories that fit in nooks and crannies of continuity either. I think they're just a cool group of guys to put together and see what happens."

How does Reed feel about the idea of a sort of "secret super-group" working behind the scenes? Is there a troubling aspect to this whole scenario? "I *could* tell you how I feel about that, but it would sort of ruin issue five!" Reed replied.

Just as the actions of the Illuminati take place outside of the spotlight, so does the creative collaboration between the book's co-writers—but Reed was willing to share a few of their secrets regarding the collaborative process. "We talk a lot about the basic big plot moments, one of us writes the rough, then we bounce it back and forth with 'I changed this scene because I thought X, Y, Z' or 'what do you think of changing page 8 so A happens instead of B?' and as it goes, it becomes stronger and better.

"We got into a groove doing this back on the ***Ultimate Spider-Man*** videogame, and then again in ***Spider-Woman: Origin,*** and it's just proving to be the best way for us to work together."

It works quite well indeed, as readers will be able to see for themselves on December 20th when ***New Avengers: Illuminati #1,*** a $2.99 comic, is scheduled for release.

by Cliff Biggers

Courtesy your friendly neighborhood comics outlet!

Farewell, Jerry Bails

by Cliff Biggers

Were it not for *Jerry Bails*, it's doubtful that you'd be reading ***Comic Shop News*** right now. While I never met Jerry, his love of his comics influenced my own life, clearing a path that others like me would follow.

Bails didn't write comics for a living. Bails *loved* comics. He wrote *about* comics. He did so in fanzines such as ***Alter Ego,*** which he launched in 1961—the same year that *Stan Lee & Jack Kirby* would begin the Marvel Age of Comics. Bails' fanzines were influenced by the many science fiction fanzines that already existed, but he was the first to focus a fanzine entirely on the comics field, giving birth to comics fandom; prior to Bails, comics fandom was regarded by most as a niche within the greater world of SF and fantasy fandom.

Bails, who died at the age of 73 of an apparent heart attack, never lost his passion for comics. After he passed ***Alter Ego*** along to then-fan *Roy Thomas* (who put the magazine on hiatus for a while when he went to work for Marvel, but has subsequently brought ***Alter Ego*** back as the premiere magazine of comics history), Bails became a scholar of the artform. He loved to catalog and document the field; his work has preserved aspects of comic book history that would have otherwise been lost forever. A majority of checklists and databases that are in use today owe their beginnings to Bails' work.

Before Bails, most comics creators were virtually unknown to their readership; Bails helped to shine the spotlight on the men and women who create the artform. Thanks to him, the walls between comics creators and comics fans were not only lowered but were all but torn down, leading to the dynamic interaction so typical among comics fans and pros today.

And were it not for Bails and ***Alter Ego*** and the other fanzines that came after him—fanzines like ***Rocket's Blast-ComiCollector*** and ***Star Studded Stories***—I never would have embarked on my own wondrous journey into the world of amateur publishing as a fanzine writer and artist. And while the printing may be far more professional and the budgets a bit larger, ***Comic Shop News*** isn't all that far removed from those fanzines. We're still fans of comics, and we're still following the path that Jerry blazed.

In a message to the legions of readers whose lives were indirectly touched by Jerry Bails, his wife Jean wrote, "Surprisingly as it may seem, fandom was not that much about comic characters either but rather it was about people discovering their potential in whatever area and developing confidence in what they could do. Also, fandom was above all good people cooperating with one another to create an entity that was greater than the sum of its parts.

"Looking at the size of some of the fanworks and conventions he would sometimes joke, 'a monster has been created,' but it was a monster he dearly loved. He had no misgivings about fandom going on quite well without him. It will because of all of you."

And it *will* go on... but it will be lessened by the loss of *Jerry Bails*.

Thanks, Jerry—from one whose life would have been far less were it not for your infectious love of comics.

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Comic Shop Newsarama

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Hey, Girls—Comics!

For its first few decades, comics were a medium that offered entertainment for readers of both genders. Through the 1960s and 1970s, the emphasis began to shift to a male readership. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, though, the medium began to cultivate a new group of female readers; in the past few years, more and more publishers have targeted comics and graphic novels towards the female audience, led by manga publishers. In 20008, one of the field's biggest publishers will launch a new line targeted specifically towards teenage girls with the debut of the Minx imprint from DC.

The Minx line will be overseen by *Karen Berger* and *Shelly Bond* of DC's Vertigo imprint, and will include between six and seven titles in 2007. The original graphic novels will be slightly larger than manga digest sized, and will retail for under $10. Minx will be the first concerted effort by a US publisher at an entire line of graphic novels aimed solely at this specific audience.

According to a report in ***The New York Times*** Arts section, Minx is viewed by DC as an alternative not only to superheroes and its other output, but also to manga, which has found a rock-solid audience among young girls. The stories, Berger told ***Comic Shop Newsarama,*** will not be manga-esque, or in manga format, but rather, all-new works aimed at the specific audience. Clarifying the content for the Times, Berger said the new OGNs will be "about more than going out with the cute guy. This line of books gives them something to read that honors that intelligence and assertiveness and that individuality."

Berger told ***Comic Shop Newsarama's*** *Matt Brady* how the line came about. "About three years ago, *Shelly Bond*, who's been a Group Editor at Vertigo for many years, pitched me the idea to do Minx," Berger said. "She was really looking at the influence of manga, for the most part, and really wanted to do a line for teenage girls that was an alternative to manga.

"Comics for girls has always been a passion of mine since I started here—I worked on ***Amethyst, Princess of Gemworld*** in the early '80s, and I worked with *George Pérez* on ***Wonder Woman*** in the late '80s—but even with those, it's hard to really create a large audience for readers who don't normally read comics when you only have one book out. You really need a *line* in order to do that, but the time then wasn't the time to do it. Girls really weren't reading comics in any large quantity. Again, the influence of manga is something that was so wonderful for our medium, because it really got older girls reading comics."

The ***New York Times*** reported that DC will spend a quarter of a million dollars to promote the Minx line in the coming months, making it "the largest thing we've done in at least three decades," according to DC president and publisher *Paul Levitz*.

The first Minx title will be ***The P.L.A.I.N. Janes*** by *Cecil Castelluci & Jim Rugg*. "It's really a phenomenal book that touches on real life in many ways in a post 9/11 world," Berger said. "We see how this girl named Jane is affected after her family's flight to the suburbs after a smaller scale terrorist attack at the beginning of the story. The story then is about this city girl starting a new life, and going through all the challenges that teenagers have when they're in a new school and a totally different environment, and having to deal with all the relationship, friendship and rivalry aspects that presents them with. What sets this book apart from a typical Mean Girls story – there's an extra layer in it that touches on the idea of what it means to be living in the world today, and how you can make it a better place for all of us.

"The girls form a secret art gang, and create these 'art demonstrations to bring about change for good, but to really show that things don't have to be done the conventional way. There's romance, unrequited romance, friendship, rivalry, family stuff – a real sense of living in the here and now, which I think, really sets it apart. It's very uniquely written and drawn."

Other upcoming titles from the line include ***Clubbing*** by *Andi Watson & Josh Howard*, about a London party girl who solves a mystery; ***Re-Gifters*** by *Mike Carey, Louise Carey, Sonny Liew, & Marc Hempel*, which tells the story of a Korean-American teenager in California who's into martial arts; and ***Good as Lily*** by *Derek Kirk Kim & Jesse Hamm*, in which a young girl meets three different versions of herself at three different ages. Berger said that, once the line debuts, DC plans to release one Minx title per month for the remainder of 2007.

As the list evidences,, Bond and Berger have set out to find the right mix of creators and concepts to make the launch a memorable one. "We really cast a wide net for this – we weren't going after one specific group," Berger said. "We wanted to get new voices into comics, and wanted to try and find women as well who could write and or draw as well.

"Shelly really canvassed a lot of different areas, from alternative publishing to webcomics and other sources to see who was out there and see what they were doing. On top of that, there were people we knew, such as *Mike Carey*, who we knew writes really great stories that click with teenage girls, like ***My Faith in Frankie***—which was, I think, one of the best things he's ever done. So we knew he had the sensibility to do this stuff for us."

Astute readers might notice that there are *two* Careys credited in the creator list. So who's the second? "Mike's fifteen year old daughter Louise, who's quite a writer all on her own, is co-writing the book with him," Berger said. "It's a family affair."

Berger stresses that all of these projects were developed with Minx in mind, rather than being culled from other imprints. "These books really couldn't fit anywhere else, to be honest. They really are geared for teenage girls, so it's really not something

that you would put out as a DCU book, because the majority of people who read DCU titles are not teenage girls. Likewise, it wouldn't work in Wildstorm either. And while we do have a lot of women reading Vertigo, it skews older. Girls do tend to read up, but as an imprint, Vertigo is geared for readers that are older than teenage girls. And rounding out the list, CMX is import manga. So we really didn't have a place for these books, and wanted to create a place that was directly for the American reader.

"Again, these are stories about *real* girls in the *real* world. There are no genre or fantasy aspects to it. We're looking at this as an alternative to manga and as an alternative to young adult fiction...

"Again, obviously, we can't overlook the importance of manga in getting teenage girls to read, but we really want to create graphic novels for American teenage girls who might not have even looked at manga... We're not bringing in manga storytelling devices, we're telling clear straightforward stories in a way that we feel they should be told, but we're not adapting any manga... We're trying to find a new area of contemporary fiction. There's no one out there, when you think about it, doing a line of graphic novels for teenage girls.... No one is really attacking this area in a full-fledged way with a major imprint, and we're doing it.

"All told, we're really excited about the material, and we've got a lot of great writers and artist who are really passionate about the stories that they want to tell."

Ashley Wood Gets Adventurous

Writer / artist *Ashley Wood* has always been on comics' cutting edge—shifting his creative focus from experimental storytelling to horror to licensed videogame-inspired comics to surreal science fiction. So what does the artist have in store with his next work, ***D'Airain Adventure?***

Howsabout a little of all the above?

According to IDW, ***D'Airain Adventure*** will be a 32-page no-ads comic comprised of a series of overlapping stories and vignettes, featuring characters from Wood's Les Mort 13 to Popbot to possibly even Aleister Crowley's offspring, and much more. The book will be so packed with Wood creativity that the first issue will have front and back cover flaps, both of which will feature additional Wood cartoons.

Wood isn't going solo with the series; he's joined by his wife, ***Lore*** co-writer *T.P. Louise*, as well as his ***Doomed*** and ***Zombies Vs. Robots*** creative partner *Chris Ryall*, who's enthused to be a part of such an ambitious book.

"When I hear someone say they're going to do a project that illustrates the ultimate potential of the comic book, I roll my eyes," said Ryall, who will contribute the five-page "Black Magick" to each issue. "But when *Ashley Wood* says it, all my eyes do is get bigger, in anticipation of seeing these words come true from one of the few people talented enough to back up that claim."

Wood, a man of few words, said simply, "Fifteen years in, *this* is the comic I've always wanted to do!"

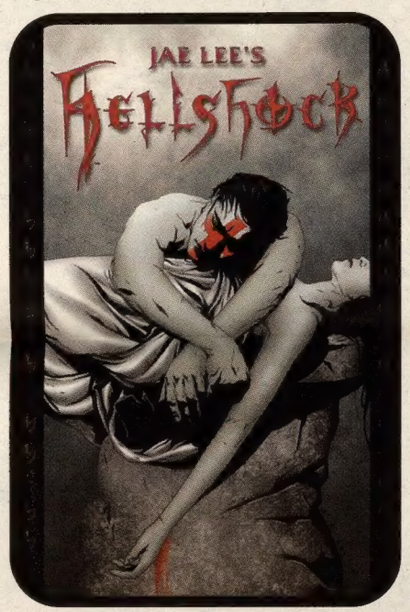
D'Airain Adventure #1 is scheduled for January release. The first issue is also available with an incentive cover that will be adorned with an Ash sketch drawn onto each individual comic book.

Dave Cockrum Passes

Artist *Dave Cockrum*, best known for his work on DC's ***Legion of Super-Heroes*** and Marvel's ***X-Men*** relaunch that elevated the team from moribundity to fan-favorite status, died in late November as a result of diabetes-related complications.

Cockrum, who was 63 at the time of his death, has been largely absent from the comics field in recent years; a story that he was slated to illustrate for last year's ***Giant-Size X-Men*** was completed by *Neal Adams* when Cockrum's health problems prevented him from finishing the assignment. His friends in comics rallied to his side in 2004, created a benefit book to help him deal with health-related expenses; at more or less the same time, Marvel Comics announced that it would pay Cockrum retroactively for his work in design and co-creation of the new X-Men.

As per his wishes, Cockrum will be cremated in lieu of being buried; those wishing to send messages of condolence to his wife Paty can e-mail them to *magnetorampant@yahoo.com*



At Last—A (Hell)Shock to the System

More than a year ago, ***CSN*** first told you about Dynamic Forces' ambitious plan to not only collect the previously published installments of *Jae Lee's* ***Hellshock,*** but to actually complete the story in one volume entitled ***Hellshock: The Definitive Edition.***

Well, it's taken about eighteen months longer than Lee and Dynamic Forces envisioned, but the book is at long last on its way to comic shops—and you should see it on the shelves in time for Christmas gift-giving, in fact!

"We apologize to the retailers and fans that this took longer to release than originally thought," Dynamic Forces President *Nick Barrucci* said. "Jae's Hellshock is the most personal story he has told, and it needed to be perfect before being released. This took longer than expected, especially since Jae wanted the ending to be worth the wait.

"*Jose Villarrubia's* original coloring was top notch, and though he was swamped, *June Chung* came in and did a fantastic job 're-mastering' the first three chapters and completing the grand finale. Retailers have order adjusted, and we expect high sell through upon release. Hopefully, the fans and retailers will feel the final product is worth the wait. I know we do!"

Of course, this wasn't the first delay for Lee's enigmatic series starring a suicidal young woman who is visited by a strange man who believes himself to be angelic presence gifted with amazing powers. When the miniseries first came out in 1996-1997, the initial three issues of the planned four issue miniseries came out, but the fourth never appeared.

"When I first started, I didn't know what I was doing, so I was using a lot of techniques to cover up the bad drawing - a lot of shadows, a lot of splatter, and a lot of crosshatching," Lee said in 2005. "I just thought that if I filled up every inch of space, it would help cover up the drawing flaws...

"But then, what happened with ***Hellshock*** was that storytelling became really important to me, because I was writing it myself. I wanted the characters to look a certain way, and wanted them to portray emotions in a convincing manner, so I had to pay attention to things that I had never really cared about before."

""The creative process is not an easy one, and with ***Hellshock*** being a very personal work, I really wanted to make sure this came out as perfect as it could," Lee said. "That took a little longer than any of us would have liked, but I feel, looking at the finished book, that the wait was worth it and I thank everyone for their patience in helping me complete this creative journey."

The collected edition will include the final, never-before-seen fourth issue, as well as an alternate beginning, and other extras.

"The effort Jae put in to make ***Hellshock*** into everything it could be was amazing," Image publisher *Erik Larsen* said. "The book outshines the comics and makes in a worthy addition to anybody's collection. This is *Jae Lee* in top form, showing all the pretenders and peons how it's done. Hellshock is outstanding."

Now that ***Hellshock: The Definitive Edition*** is finally on its way to comic shops, Barrucci promised further news on the long-delayed *Howard Chaykin's* ***American Flagg!*** collection in the near future.

Hine Speaks Out on Silent War

In the middle of all this ***Civil War*** buzz, it's no surprise that readers might have forgotten that there was another declaration of war in the Marvelverse recently. In the final issue of *David Hine's* ***Son of M,*** the king of the Inhumans, the always-silent Black Bolt, declared war on the United States. Now readers will have a chance to see the ramifications of this war, brought on by the US's expropriation of the Terrigen Crystals from Quicksilver, who stole the crystals from the Inhumans' homeworld.

In ***Silent War,*** Hine forces the Marvelverse to deal with a very different kind of war on a most unexpected front. For Hine, the opportunity to take the Inhumans to the next level—and in particular to develop the role of Black Bolt in the Marvel Universe—was too much to pass up. "Black Bolt has fascinated me since his first appearance in ***Fantastic Four,***" Hine told ***Comic Shop Newsarama's*** *Vaneta Rogers.* "The idea that he can never speak because his voice unleashes a devastating destructive force is one of those classic ideas of the Lee/Kirby era.

"What made the story really take off for me though, was the re-introduction of his daughter Luna. I was familiar with the core characters -- Gorgon Medusa, Triton, Crystal, Lockjaw and Maximus -- but I didn't know much about Luna. Once I had read all the back issues featuring Pietro it seemed weird that he had abandoned his daughter. I think there's a tendency for comics writers to pack the kids off out of the way. But Luna is a very strong character and she'll be playing a big role once again.

"My interest in the Inhumans has certainly grown since reading the series by *Paul Jenkins & Jae Lee* and then *Sean McKeever's* series featuring the younger Inhumans. There are so many aspects of their world to explore. It seems insane to me that they don't have a monthly title. Does that sound like a hint?"

Hine saw the post-***House of M*** Pietro as a perfect vehicle for an Inhumans tale. "When Pietro became depressed and suicidal after losing his powers, it seemed natural for him to run to Crystal. Once he was back in Attilan he was obviously going to look to the Mists of Terrigen to restore his powers. So the involvement of the Inhumans was inevitable. The Inhumans form one of the most interesting parts of the Marvel Universe. Because they are a completely separate race and culture, there are a lot more fantasy elements to their stories. It goes way beyond superheroics."

Is the Marvelverse US prepared to go to war with a superhuman nation? They'd better be, because the war is coming—and superpowers are at the heart of the dispute. "Inhuman Culture is centered on Terrigenesis, the process that most Inhumans go through during adolescence. The Terrigen Mists trigger their latent mutation revealing their true aspects as warriors, artists, healers and so on. Without Terrigenesis their culture would stagnate and die. In ***Son of M,*** Quicksilver stole the Terrigen Crystals, the catalyst that creates the Mists.

"He intended to use the Mists to restore powers to former mutants after ***House of M.*** The crystals fell into the hands of the Office of National Emergency and they are now being held in the Pentagon. The United

Continued on page 6

A 5-part event introducing a new Master of Magic to the DC Universe

SARGON THE SORCERER #1
Steve Niles Scott Hampton

BLACK ALICE #1
Gail Simone Duncan Rouleau

DETECTIVE CHIMP #1
Bill Willingham Shawn McManus

IBIS THE INVINCIBLE #1
Tad Williams Phil Winslade

ZAURIEL #1
Steve Gerber Peter Snejbjerg

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FROM THE PAGES OF
WHO WILL BE THE NEXT TO WEAR...
THE HELMET OF
FATE?

States government has determined that the Mists are weapons of mass destruction, and there is no way they will allow them to be returned to the Inhumans. That's the situation that led to Black Bolt's declaration of war. At the moment that declaration only applies to the US—but as with all wars, there is the danger of rapid escalation that could draw in all the nations of Earth."

Just what does the US intend to do with the Terrigen Mists? "Right now, the Mists are in a O*N*E experimental lab in the Pentagon, where they are being tested on various subjects. As we have seen though, Quicksilver kept some for himself and has developed the ability to confer Terrigenesis by a 'laying on of hands' as seen in *Peter David's* ***X-Factor***.

"Quicksilver sees himself as a messianic guru/healer. Former mutants come to him to have their powers restored but the results are usually disastrous. Quicksilver insists that the results depend on the mental state of the subject. So it's a karma kind'a thing. You get the powers you deserve.

"In his twisted way he sees himself as a savior of mutantkind. He still hasn't come to any kind of acceptance of his own responsibility for the events of ***House of M*** and ***Decimation*** that ultimately led to the ***Civil War*** scenario.

"His relationship with his estranged wife, Crystal, and Luna will come to a head in this series and we'll see just how bed-bug crazy Pietro has actually become."

While Hine saw the theft of the Terrigen Crystals as a major event, he didn't envision it leading to a declaration of war. "That came down from [editor] *Tom Brevoort*. I can't claim that one as my idea. War seems to be a common theme in American comic books right now. I can't imagine why…"

Hine is the first to agree that the prospect of a war with the Inhumans is a disturbing one. "The Inhumans are collectively the most powerful group of superhumans in existence. And Black Bolt has The Voice. The idea is that the Inhumans are up there on the moon, a constant reminder to mankind that there could be an attack at any time.

"Back in the 1950's when Russia launched Sputnik there was a paranoid belief among the American public that the Russians would be able to drop bombs on them from satellites. It's a similar feeling looking up and seeing the Moon, knowing the Inhumans are up there, plotting the destruction of America."

And there's that aforementioned Voice. "Black Bolt is like the atomic bomb: A weapon that is so powerful it should never be used except as a deterrent. He has only unleashed his full power a very few times and always with disastrously destructive results. Like Callisto said in ***Son of M*** – "you *don't* want to mess with the Inhumans."

Now that the government *has* messed with them, the Inhumans decide it's time to escalate the conflict, beginning with "a guerilla attack by a group led by Gorgon. They hit a civilian target in New York and things get way out of hand. This is perceived as a terrorist attack and the Fantastic Four respond. So the first skirmish in the war is between Inhumans and their greatest friends and allies on Earth."

A conflict between former friends... sounds like a familiar theme in today's Marvelverse, doesn't it? "This will be painful for everyone concerned," Hine said. "The Inhumans have been members of, or affiliated with, every major grouping of superheroes in the Marvel Universe. Crystal has been the lover of Johnny Storm and the Sentry, Medusa has been a member of the Fantastic Four, Crystal a member of the FF and the Avengers. As long as this was a cold war, it was an issue that could be largely avoided—but now people are dying."

As the conflict spreads, it will include other characters in the Marvel Universe, including "the Sentry and various other members of the Avengers," Hine said, as well as "Madrox and Layla from X-Factor."

On the Inhumans' side, readers can expect to see some new characters. "Somnus is a dreamcaster. He can literally pull dreams out of his head, and manifest them as weapons that latch onto his victims, incapacitating them for as long as the dream lasts.

"Desidera is a Finder. She psychically taps into a longing for absent things and once she has the unique psychic signature of the missing person or object she tracks it like a bloodhound."

While the book was initially solicited with art by *Roy Allan Martinez*, that changed prior to publication. "Unfortunately Roy has been unable to commit himself to this series, so we have a new artist coming on board, the amazing *Mr. Frazer Irving*," Hine said. I'm very pleased to be working with him. That's not just me being diplomatic. He's a brilliant artist and a lot of people are going to be glad to see him on this book... Check out his previous work on British weekly ***2000AD***, *Grant Morrison's* ***Klarion the Witch Boy***, ***Iron Man: Inevitable*** with *Joe Casey*, and lots more good stuff."

Hine describes the series as "stylistically and thematically similar to ***Son of M***, so if you liked that series, you'll like this one. For fans of the Inhumans, this is absolutely *vital*. The story has huge ramifications for the future of the Inhuman race. There are a lot of skeletons in the closets of Attilan, and I'm going to drag a few of them out into the light."

Silent War #1 is scheduled for January 17th release.

Buffy's New Season On It Way to Comic Shops

Last summer, ***CSN*** told you about Dark Horse's plans to publish a new ***Buffy the Vampire Slayer*** series that wold basically serve as "season eight" of the acclaimed television series—and we told you that ***Buffy*** creator *Joss Whedon* would be the mastermind for this series. Now Whedon has shared a few more details of his plans in a conversation with *Jeff Jensen* that appeared in a recent issue of ***Entertainment Weekly.***

According to Whedon, the new series grew out of a plan to continue ***Buffy*** on film. "I had been thinking about doing some TV movies based on Buffy characters, but we could never get anything resembling financing together that was realistic, so it fell by the wayside," Whedon said. "But that whole failed endeavor made me start thinking about what would happen next, and what the stories and mythology would be. I realized there was a lot to say, and it could make for a really fun comic book."

Whedon will write the first four issues of the series before passing the honors on to other writers, some of whom have worked on ***Buffy*** before and some who haven't—including acclaimed comics, television, and film writer *Jeph Loeb*, who will contribute one arc.

Other hints from Whedon about his plans for the series:

- The thousands of girls who were empowered by ***Buffy*** at the end of Season 7 are still empowered. But that doesn't mean there're no more problems: "She may have closed the Hellmouth under Sunnydale and defeated The First. But evil? Still rampant!"
- The comic will pick up on a mention in the ***Angel*** television series that Buffy spent some time in Italy after the events of Season 7.
- Ideas that Whedon had considered for a ***Buffy*** spinoff unofficially referred to as "Slayer School" will make it into the new series—which makes sense now that there are thousands of new slayers the world over.
- The Scooby Gang *will* be back…but slowly, as time has passed and the audience will, according to Whedon, have to re-learn who these people are at this later point in their respective lives. Whedon said he wants to give everyone the entrance they deserve. "Over the course of my four-issue arc, you'll get a sense of where most of our major supporting characters are now."
- Angel and Spike will appear, but their role will be limited due to the fact that IDW holds the comic rights to the characters.
- The new series will *not* resolve what happened at the cliffhanger ending of ***Angel***.

Coming Comics—Image in February

James Pruett & Mike Perkins' occult adventure series ***Black Mist*** is published in color for the first time when Image relaunches the book in February.

Twenty years in the future, vampires set up their own European country in the four-part ***Blood Nation*** by *Rob Moran & James Devlin.* Now, Captain Ethan Cutter must lead an elite special forces unit to infiltrate the Blood Nation to stop the vampire horde from being unleashed again upon humanity.

Madman's move to Image begins with the release of ***Madman Gargantua,*** an 800+ page hardcover collecting every Madman story produced by *Mike Allred* to date. This will lead into the April launch of a new ***Madman*** series.

Kyle Baker brings his biographical look at the legendary Nat turner to Image with the release of ***Nat Turner Book Two: Revolution.***

Sam Noir goes on vacation... but there's no holiday as far as assassins are concerned! See what happens when a samurai detective hits the beach in ***Sam Noir: Ronin Holiday #1*** by *Eric Anderson & Manny Trembley.*

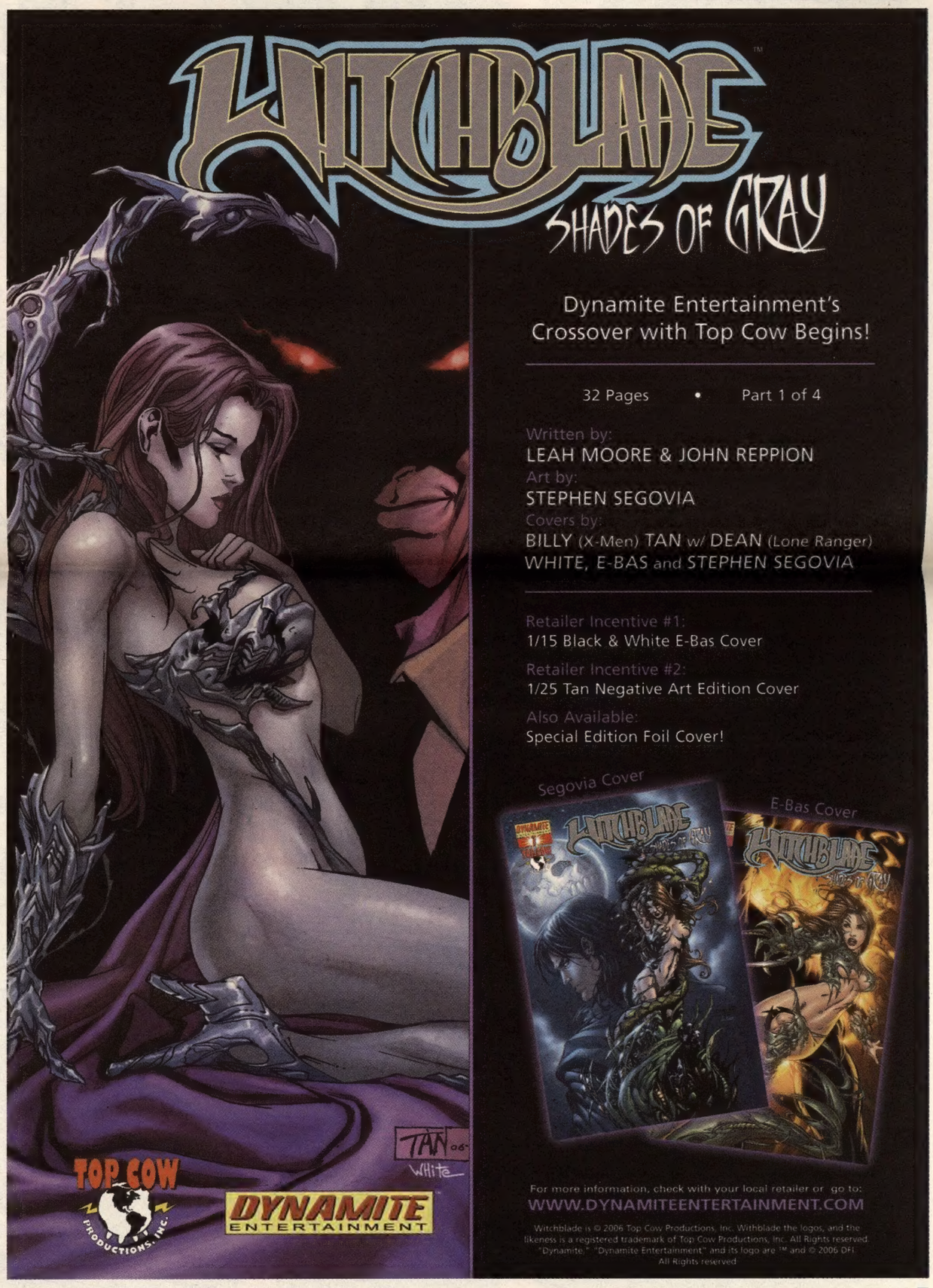
Steve Horton & David Ahn take a look at twin brothers whose lives take very different turns in the futuristic ***Strongarm #1.*** Rob is a pathetic 30-year-old delivery boy and Nick leads an underground resistance movement. One fateful day, Rob is beset upon by an assassin wielding a vicious pair of biomechanical arms. Rob kills his attacker, but the arms graft themselves to him—and have a mind of their own!...

After Sam Garrison and his pregnant wife move into a rough inner-city neighborhood plagued by gangs and drugs, Sam and his neighbor Mark Buchanan decide to bring their own brand of justice to the streets as masked vigilantes called the Watchdogs. But Sam learns that Mark has a darker agenda... and finds himself accused of murder. See what happens next in ***Watchdogs,*** a graphic novel by *Fred Van Lente & Brian Churilla.*

Witchblade's turning Japanese in ***Witchblade Manga #1*** by *Sumita Kazasa & Kobayashi Yasuko.* Takeru is an average schoolgirl being raised in a Buddhist monastery by a group of nuns. Except for the forbidden wicked looking claw locked in a box that keeps appearing in her dreams!

Image collected editions include:

- ***The Agency,*** collecting the limited series by *Paul Jenkins & Kyle Hotz;*
- ***Death Jr. Volume 2*** by *Gary Whitta & Ted Naifeh;*
- ***Emissary Volume One: Revelations,*** collecting ***Emissary #s 1-4;***
- ***Savage Dragon Volume 11: Resurrection,*** collecting ***Savage Dragon #s 53-58;***
- ***Spawn: Armageddon Part Two,*** collecting ***Spawn #s 156-163;***
- ***Spawn Collection Volume Two,*** a hardcover compilation of ***spawn #s 13-33;***
- ***Strange Girl Volume Three: Paint a Vulgar Picture,*** collecting ***Strange Girl #s 10-15;***
- ***Trakk: Monster Hunter,*** collecting the series by *Stan Winston, Francis Takenaga,* and others; and
- ***Walking Dead Volume Six: The Sorrowful Life,*** collecting ***Walking Dead #s 31-36.***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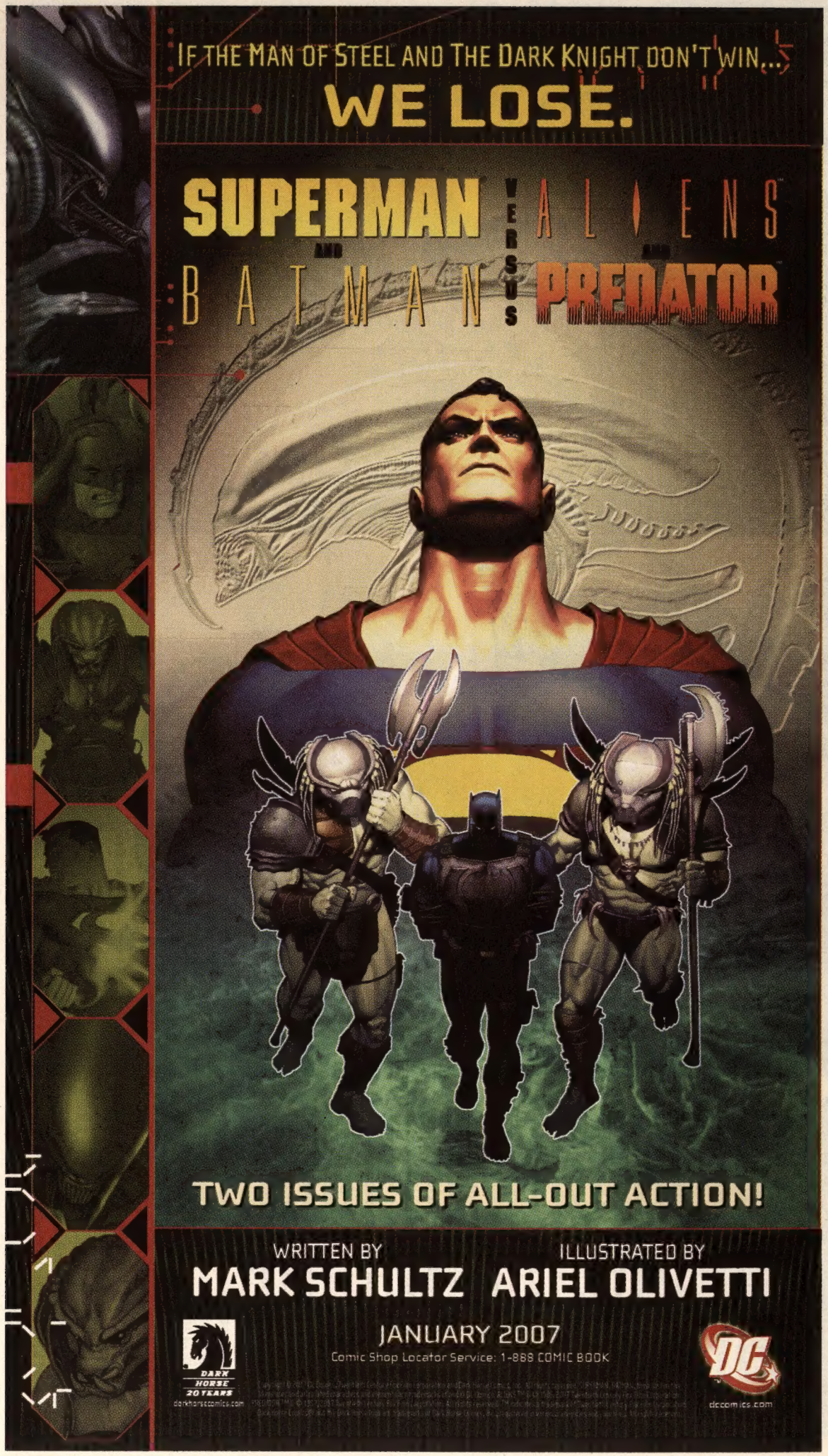
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